Special Issue No. 2 on the FBI

Its Undercover Cooperation with House Un-American and Senate Internal Security Committee

I. F. Stone's Weekly

VOL. VII, NO. 42 NOVEMBER 9, 1959 101 WASHINGTON, D. C. 15 CENTS

J. Edgar Hoover and the Witch Hunters

The darkest corner of the witch hunt is the relationship between the FBI and the various State and Congressional investigating committees. Most writers have shied away from this area. It is a pity the *New York Post,* in the 12-part series on J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI which we discussed last week, did not devote attention to it. There is evidence which suggests that the FBI works with Senate Internal Security and House Un-American, furnishing them with leads, witnesses and undercover informers, as seems to be the case again in the current California hearings.

Dies Got That First List

The earliest indication of such cooperation that I have been able to find is in the sensation Martin Dies created in late September, 1939, when he announced that the Roosevelt Administration was getting ready to purge the government of "about 2,850 known Communists" (no less) in "key positions." This was denied by Justice Department. August Raymond Ogden's scholarly study of the Un-American Activities Committee under Dies (1938-43) reports that according to the *Chicago Tribune* "the list of Communists had been compiled by the FBI two years previously and had been suppressed and J. Edgar Hoover had been rebuked for overstepping his authority."

Some indications of cooperation between the FBI and the witch hunt may be found in the Cornell Studies in Civil Liberties. Prof. Edward L. Barrett, Jr.'s volume on California's Tenney committee quotes from its 1943 report, "The committee, at all times, cooperated closely with the intelligence units of the armed forces and with the FBI. Representatives of the committee have worked for weeks at a time with the agents of Federal departments." Considering the notorious quality of the Tenney committee's work, the liaison does not reflect credit on the Federal agencies.

Prof. Vern Countryman in his volume on the Canwell committee in the State of Washington traces the sensation with which Canwell launched his activities in January, 1948, to FBI reports. The committee "exposed" Jesse Epstein, regional director of the Federal Housing Administration as a Communist. Canwell admitted to Countryman that his committee "worked closely with some Federal agencies" but declined to identify them. Mr. Epstein denied any affiliation with communism. After he managed to get the two FBI informants who were the source of the accusation before a loyalty board, the board unanimously cleared him.

The Canwell committee "scooped" House Un-American by almost two weeks on the Bentley-Chambers revelations of a spy ring in Washington. A Federal grand jury in New York had barely finished indicting the 12 Communist leaders under the Smith Act in July, 1948, when Howard Rushmore was complaining to the Canwell committee that it had failed to indict any "concealed Communists." He read to the committee from what he claimed was an FBI report given to the grand jury. The report dealt with " a highly secret cell of the Communist Party in Washington, D. C." Rushmore told the Canwell committee that Alger Hiss had been named as a Communist by Whittaker Chambers to the FBI in 1943.

In his study of the House Un-American Activities Committee for the Cornell series, Prof. Robert K. Carr observes of its hearings in this period, "A surprisingly large number of them made public information already well known to the FBI," noting that "Often the leading witness was an undercover FBI agent who had infiltrated the Communist movement." Prof. Carr added, *"It is quite apparent that these hearings were designed to serve the purpose of publicizing information in the FBI files."* (Italics added).

How the Committees Are Useful

"Mr. [J. Edgar] HOOVER. That is where committees of Congress have served a very useful purpose in exposing some of these activities which no Federal agency is in a position to do, because the information we obtain in the Bureau is either for intelligence purposes or for use in prosecution, and committees of Congress have wider latitude in that respect."

(Discussion held off the record.)

—Hearings on the 1957 Justice Dept. Budget, House Appropriations Committee, p. 247.

"Something We Cannot Talk Too Much About"

The most striking case, of course, was the appearance of Miss Bentley, fresh from the unsuccessful grand jury proceedings. Prof. Carr failed to notice a revealing remark on that occasion by J. Parnell Thomas, who was then chairman of the House Committee. When Miss Bentley had finished her story, Richard Nixon suggested that the FBI Chief be subpoenaed to obtain "any corroborative evidence he may have as to these activities." The Chairman's reply contained a hint which led Nixon to drop the subject. "The closest relationship exists between this committee and the FBI," Chairman Thomas said. "I cannot say as much as (sic) between this committee and the Attorney General's office, but the closest relationship exists between this committee and the FBI. I think there is a very good understanding between us. It is something, however, that we cannot talk too much about."

Mr. Hoover had been before the committee the previous year as a witness (along with a U.S. Chamber of Commerce spokesman) against a bill to outlaw the Communist party.

(Continued on Page Two)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(*Continued from Page One*)

He had then expounded his own strategy. "Victory will be assured," he said, "when Communists are identified and exposed, because the people will take the first step of quarantining them so they can do no harm." "Quarantine" here seems to be a euphemism for blacklist. In his grand design, the committee could play a key role. "This committee," the FBI chief said, "renders a distinct service when it publicly reveals the diabolic machination of sinister figures engaged in un-American activities." But he could hardly have appeared as a "corroborative" witness for Miss Bentley without (1) appearing too openly in alliance with a Republican-dominated committee exploiting her testimony to smear the Truman administration and (2) appearing to be violating the secrecy of the grand jury.

The Division of Labor in the Witch Hunt

That task he left to the House Un-American Activities Committee. The division of labor as the committee conceived it was set forth in the *Interim Report on Espionage in the U.S. Government* with which it rushed into print with the Bentley-Chambers stories August 28, 1949. "The FBI", said the report, "functions to find and assimilate all the facts. . . . The Federal grand jury functions to consider the evidence. . . . The House Committee on Un-American Activities functions to alert the public."

The Committee in its report said it "knew that certain divisions of the Government were under rigid surveillance by the FBI." It was "aware that a secret blue ribbon grand jury had been convened in New York City to consider this Government espionage." It said that "in deference to the functions of the grand jury" and of "the investigative agencies", the committee took no action. But when the grand jury "recessed after sitting for 14 months without returning any indictment" the committee "felt compelled to bring to the attention of the American people the information that it had before it." A close liaison with the FBI was implied when the report went on to say, "When we called Elizabeth T. Bentley before our committee on July 31, we were fully aware that her information and allegations had been thoroughly checked by the FBI, and that they had been substantiated."

Not Much Could Be Checked

Mr. Hoover himself put it more cautiously when five years later he finally appeared before Senate Internal Security to backstop Attorney General Brownell's "revelations" about Harry Dexter White (Nov. 17, 1953). "All information furnished by Miss Bentley, *which was susceptible to check* has proven to be correct," Mr. Hoover told the committee. (Our italics.) Apparently not much was *susceptible* of checking. The *Newark Evening News* disclosed (Nov. 8, 1953) that 500 FBI agents had worked for a year in an effort to check the Bentley charges. "No move was made all year by the FBI against White or any other suspect," an unnamed official told that paper, "The agency did not want to arouse the suspicions of persons on whom it was checking." In January, 1947, the FBI gave up.

In allowing Miss Bentley to appear as a witness before the Un-American Activities Committee, the FBI was alerting those she accused. Those she named were not informed of this by the grand jury and did not know of the part she had played until her public appearance. Either the FBI thought the political bombshell was worth the sacrifice of counter-espionage considerations or it had decided she had nothing of value to offer either for counter-espionage or prosecution. Perhaps the Bentley affair parallels the House Committee's now forgotten sensations about "Scientist X" and atomic espionage. Prof. Carr observes in his book that those hearings, too, were based on "ground that had long been explored by the FBI" and that when Justice Department "did undertake to prosecute certain individuals for atomic espionage, the persons involved had never figured in any House committee investigations." The material regurgitated was good for nothing but smear purposes.

Not A Non-Partisan 'Loan'

Another item linking the FBI chief with the witch hunt came to light when Robert E. Lee was appointed a Federal Communications Commissioner in 1954. The biography he supplied the Senate Commerce Committee disclosed for the first time that he had been "loaned" (the word was Mr. Lee's) to the House Appropriations Committee in 1946. Mr. Lee was an FBI man who had risen to be Mr. Hoover's administrative assistant. The year 1946 was the year the U.S. Chamber of Commerce blueprinted its drive against subversives in government, labor, Hollywood, the press and radio. Taber of New York, the ranking Republican on Appropriations, was talking as early as April, 1946, of the need for purging Reds from the State Department. In 1947 Mr. Lee went into the State Department files and compiled that list of 108 "subversives" from which McCarthy drew most of his sensational material, as the Tydings committee reported in 1950. Mr. Lee seems to have been a less than non-partisan borrowing from the FBI. When the Republicans won in 1946 and Mr. Taber became chairman of House Appropriations, Mr. Lee was appointed chief of staff. When the Republicans lost in 1948, he became minority clerk. Mr. Lee in 1950 helped McCarthy defeat Tydings, and in the course of that unusually dirty campaign banked a $5,000 contribution through his wife's account without reporting it, an election law offense. Mr.

Senator Mundt Lifted the Curtain on How the FBI Works With The Witch Hunt

"In Salt Lake City, Senator Mundt, member of the permanent Senate Investigating Committee, told the Bonneville Knife and Fork Club of three current or recent espionage investigations—one which disclosed the existence of a spy ring at the Army's secret radar laboratory at Fort Monmouth, N. J. . . .

"One point he made in justification of continued Congressional investigation was that these probes are a valuable supplement to the investigative work of the FBI. The FBI may compile much evidence on Communist infiltration, but not enough to justify indictments. Often in such cases, said the Senator, the FBI will tip off a Congressional committee as to a situation where it is convinced American security is endangered.

"The committee's inquiry thus makes it possible to bring the case into the open and, with the suspected Communist spy usually taking refuge in the fifth amendment's protection against incriminating himself, it is possible to eliminate that particular threat. Just that, the Senator said, has happened in a number of cases, and he implied it would and should continue to happen."

—Editorial, Salt Lake City, Utah, Tribune, Nov. 21, 1953.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lee denied that McCarthy had anything to do with his appointment but added "McCarthy is a friend of mine. I like him. I think he is a great guy."

Mr. Hoover shared this enthusiasm. The *Post* series printed the FBI Chief's hero-worshipping tribute to McCarthy in an interview with the *San Diego Evening News* (Aug. 22, 1953) when McCarthy and Hoover were both vacationing at La Jolla, California. But it does not go into the evidence of a close working relationship between the two men. Mr. Hoover extended a helping hand to McCarthy in the latter's first setback. This was in July 1953 when McCarthy was forced to drop J. B. Matthews as staff director after the latter's attack on the Protestant clergy. McCarthy covered his retreat by letting it be known that he was conferring with the FBI Chief on the choice of a successor. A few days afterward Frank P. Carr, supervisor of the FBI's New York office, took the job with McCarthy. This was a warning to McCarthy's enemies that the G-man was in his corner.

A Fatal Alliance for McCarthy

The Hoover alliance may have been McCarthy's downfall. In the Fall of 1953, McCarthy set out on a series of sensational investigations which made it appear that Army Intelligence was doing a bad job. In the now forgotten case of the Siberian pamphlet, in those of Dr. Irving Peress and Annie Lee Moss, and above all in the Fort Monmouth affair, McCarthy took on that fight with the military which lead to his censure. Back of this attack on military intelligence, as we reported at the time (Oct. 3, 1953), was "the long-time ambition of McCarthy's ally, J. Edgar Hoover, to take over all intelligence." It was in the course of this battle with Army intelligence that McCarthy began to come up with portions of secret reports from J. Edgar Hoover. This was so in the Annie Lee Moss case; this poor Negro woman's appearance before the McCarthy committee and her reinstatement in her War Dept. job was a defeat not only for McCarthy but for Hoover.

The best known case of this kind, of course, involves the Army Signal Corps installation at Fort Monmouth. McCarthy turned up at the Army hearings in 1954 with portions of a letter written by Hoover January 26, 1951, to Major General Bolling, chief of Army intelligence, containing the names of 34 allegedly disloyal employes at Ft. Monmouth. These poor people were suspended in 1951 and then reinstated after an investigation. This seems to have angered the FBI. McCarthy frightened the Army into a second round of suspensions and investigation. The final upshot was (1) the clearance of all those accused but (2) the disruption of Army work on missiles, particularly their guidance systems.*

One good Washington source the *Post* reporters seem to have overlooked was Senator Fulbright, the only man to vote against the McCarthy committee appropriation in 1954. He told an Associated Press reporter at the time that he was no longer giving information to the FBI because he was convinced the McCarthy committee had access to its files. McCarthy at a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing March 22, 1954, called this "a most irresponsible, a most vicious attack upon the FBI." This led Senator Fulbright next day to amplify his offhand remark in a formal statement (AP, *Wash-Post,* March 24, 1954) in which he cited several instances during discussion of the Ft. Monmouth affair in which McCarthy claimed access to FBI sources, including an FBI report on an Army major. Senator Fulbright in that same statement called attention to a speech by Senator Mundt in Salt Lake City which had not been carried on the news services. In this speech (see textual excerpts in box on page two) Mundt

(*Continued on Page Four*)

*** The Washington Star study of "leaks" from the FBI files quoted in the box on this page said of this affair: "Although Mr. Hoover denied that the McCarthy document was a 'copy' of any FBI letter or report, it became clear at the hearing that the Senator's document contained much of the information included in a 15-page memorandum which the FBI director acknowledged he dispatched to General Bolling on the same date—January 26, 1951. Later, the Senator said that a young Army intelligence officer, whom he declined to identify, slipped him the FBI material. Although the Wisconsin Republican's explanation has not been generally questioned by the press and public, Army sources take it with a grain of salt. They point out that despite an exhaustive G-2 investigation, the 'leak' has never been found. They assert that Senator McCarthy, who then was at war with the Army and friendly with the FBI, could have protected the Bureau and given the Army a black eye at one stroke by pinning the leak on a G-2 officer."**

"We Wouldn't Be Able to Stay in Business If It Weren't for the FBI"

"'We wouldn't be able to stay in business overnight if it weren't for the Bureau.'

"This statement was made to this reporter some time ago by a former special agent of the FBI who then was a staff investigator for a congressional committee dealing with communism and subversion.

"His statement is in direct conflict with the FBI's position that it does not violate a presidential directive and make available confidential security information to the Congress. And it is in conflict with disclaimers from congressional committee members, who say they do not have access to FBI data.

"The evidence is clear, however, that confidential FBI information does find its way into committee files by some means. . . .

"The former agent's statement about congressional reliance on the FBI is exaggerated. Congressional Red-hunting committees have developed cases of their own, with little or no help from the FBI or other executive investigative arms.

"But the ex-agent's basic point is a valid one. Without access to information developed by FBI and, to a lesser extent, military intelligence operatives—data which, by presidential directive, they are not supposed to have—Communist-hunting committees would find it difficult to carry on. . . .

"Most of the executive investigative agencies maintain close liaison with the two congressional Red-hunting groups each of which has had former FBI agents on its staff for years.

"The Un-American Activities Committee in 1954 had four former bureau agents and one ex-Secret Service operative on its staff of investigators. The FBI has had one or more special agents assigned to gleaning data from the extensive files of the Un-American Activities Committee since the 1940s.

"Information developed by the FBI which finds its way to the committees does not necessarily have to come directly from the Bureau nor does it have to be a formal report or memorandum. It can be passed by word of mouth, tips or summaries of reports. Or it can be a report turned over by another executive agency which received it from the FBI."

—Washington Sunday Star, April 28, 1957, FBI Data and Congress: It Finds Its Way, by L. Edgar Prina.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

U. S. Chamber of Commerce Recommended This Kind of "Exposure" in 1935

(*Continued from Page Three*)

lifted the curtain on the cooperation between the FBI and Congressional investigation of "subversives."

The only other publication we know of that has gone at all thoroughly into this aspect of the FBI story is the conservative but independent *Washington Evening Star* which assigned a staff reporter to investigate in 1957 after Herbert Norman, the Canadian Ambassador to Egypt, committed suicide. The Senate Internal Security Committee had rehashed charges that he had Communist associations and Robert Morris, the committee's counsel, based these accusations on a report by "a security agency." The reporter assigned by the *Star*, L. Edgar Prina, had friendly ties with the witch hunt committees. He quoted one witch hunter as saying, "We wouldn't be able to stay in business overnight if it weren't for the Bureau," i.e. the Federal Bureau of Investigation (see the heart of his report in the box on page three). Mr. Prina concluded that the committees *were* fed by the FBI and that information did not have to come directly out of the files but could be passed by "word of mouth, tips and summaries." I might add that such tips could enable committee investigators to find documents in other places. This may be how the Un-American Activities Committee learned about the letter J. Edgar Hoover had sent Secretary of Commerce W. Averill Harriman smearing Dr. Edward U. Condon, then head of the Bureau of Standards. The Committee found the letter in Commerce Dept. files.

"Whether Communist or Not"

One of the main sources to which one must look for the origins of the witch hunt is in the files of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. As early as November 1934, its committee on communism and socialism recommended the setting up of a Federal agency in the Department of Justice "to investigate, record, control, and prosecute all subversive agitators . . . whether or not affiliated with the Communist party" and by publicity "to check subversive activities in advance, to unmask Communist-controlled organizations and to alienate support by law-abiding Americans . . . from all movements having subversive aims." * (Recommendations approved at the 23rd annual meeting of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, May 2, 1935, and published by the Chamber in a pamphlet "*Combatting Subversive Activities in the United States.*") The Chamber of Commerce never succeeded in establishing such a Federal agency but this is the job the FBI and the investigating committees do between them. It has nothing to do with "counter-espionage" by the FBI nor with the Committees' claims to be engaging in legislative activity. It represents the use of a secret political police to feed unproven information into inquisitorial committees set up to pillory and ostracize radicals. This aspect of the FBI's activities continues to cast its pall on free opinion and free association.

J. Edgar Clears Horse-Racing

Q. Why are you a race fan, Mr. Hoover?

A. I have found that an afternoon at the races gives me complete relaxation from a gruelling week of work at the FBI. . . . I have found racing to be a wholesome diversion.

Q. Are there any moral issues involved in thoroughbred racing of which you are aware?

A. No. . . . The only moral issue that I see is not one of racing itself but of the individual. I think anyone who overbets on the races is a fool. . . .

Q. Then you don't feel the wagering in racing is objectionable?

A. Not if it is done in moderation. . . . Many church groups find bingo a diversion. . . . Actually, from a law enforcement standpoint, a well-conducted race-track is a help if only for the reason that the people at the track are finding an outlet for their emotions.

—From an interview last Aug. 7 with the Morning Telegraph, photostatically reproduced on the first page of a 6-page special advertising section in the Washington Daily News Oct. 27 announcing the opening of the Laurel, Md., Race Track next day.

*** Some idea of the political preconceptions behind this report may be gathered from the fact that, among other evidence of world-wide conspiracy, it lists "1933—Communist threat to the German government . . ." Writing in November, 1934, after almost two years experience with Hitler, it thus accepts his version of why he took power. No mention is made by the report of Nazism, racism or Fascism.**

You Can Still Start A Gift Sub With These Two Issues on the FBI If You Fill Out the Blank Below

I. F. Stone's Weekly, 5618 Nebraska Ave., N. W. Washington 15, D. C.

Please renew (or enter) my sub for the enclosed $5:*

Name .....

Street .....

City .....**Zone**.....**State**.....

11/9/59

Enter gift sub for $2 (6 mos.) or $4 (1 yr.) additional:

(To) Name .....

Street .....

City .....**Zone**.....**State**.....

Shall we send gift announcement? Yes ☐ No ☐

I. F. Stone's Weekly
5618 Nebraska Ave., N. W.
Washington 15, D. C.

NEWSPAPER

Entered as Second Class Mail Matter Washington, D. C. Post Office

I. F. Stone's Weekly. Entered as Second Class Matter at Washington, D. C., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Post-dated Mondays but published every Thursday except the last two Thursdays of August and December at 5618 Nebraska Ave., N. W., Washington 15, D. C. An independent weekly published and edited by I. F. Stone; Circulation Manager, Esther M. Stone. Subscription: $5 in the U. S.; $6 in Canada; $10 elsewhere. Air Mail rates: $15 to Europe; $20 to Israel, Asia and Africa.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED